

ESSAYES

UPON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS:

Not unworthy consideration
in these times.

Communicated by LETTERS to private
Friends, and at their request to the Publick.

*— Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti. —*

LONDON,

Printed by Richard Cotes for Edward Husband, at the
Golden Dragon in Fleetstreet, 1651.

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OF F. L. BAY

JUNE 1, 1910

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LONDON

Printed by the Cambridge University Press
at the University Press, Cambridge



ESSAY I.



He Disputes concerning *Jurisdiction* in matters relating to the Church, have been so various, that they have much shaken the peace of the State; whilst many making it a great part of their *Religion* to contest for power, have almost altogether destroy'd the *power of Religion*. The strife amongst the Disciples of our Saviour [*who should be the greatest*] seems not yet to be ended; and though we all profess our selves to be servants of that Master, whose kingdom is not of this world, yet those who in a more peculiar manner bear his cognizance, think it is not enough for them to reign with him hereafter, unless they may bee admitted to exercise some jurisdiction for him here below; the way to keep the government upon his shoulder is (as they suppose) to put it into their hands. Yet

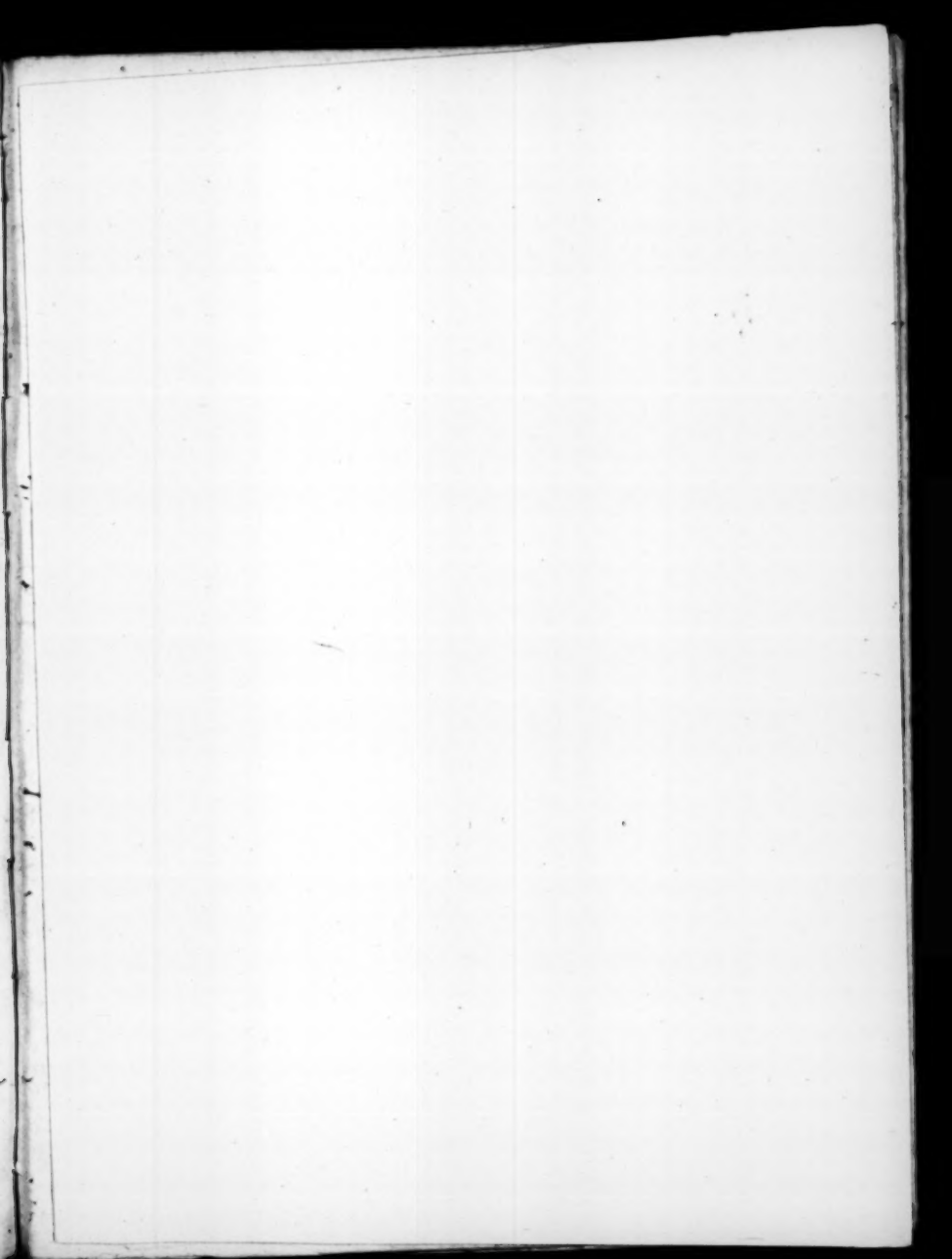
since they seem to claim no power herein, but what they pretend to derive from Christ, who is confessed by all to bee the head of the Church, the truest ground we can take to cleer these Disputes, will bee to examine the power which Christ attributeth solely to himself over his Church, and that wherein hee useth the Ministry of others, and how far the Magistrate is concerned therein.

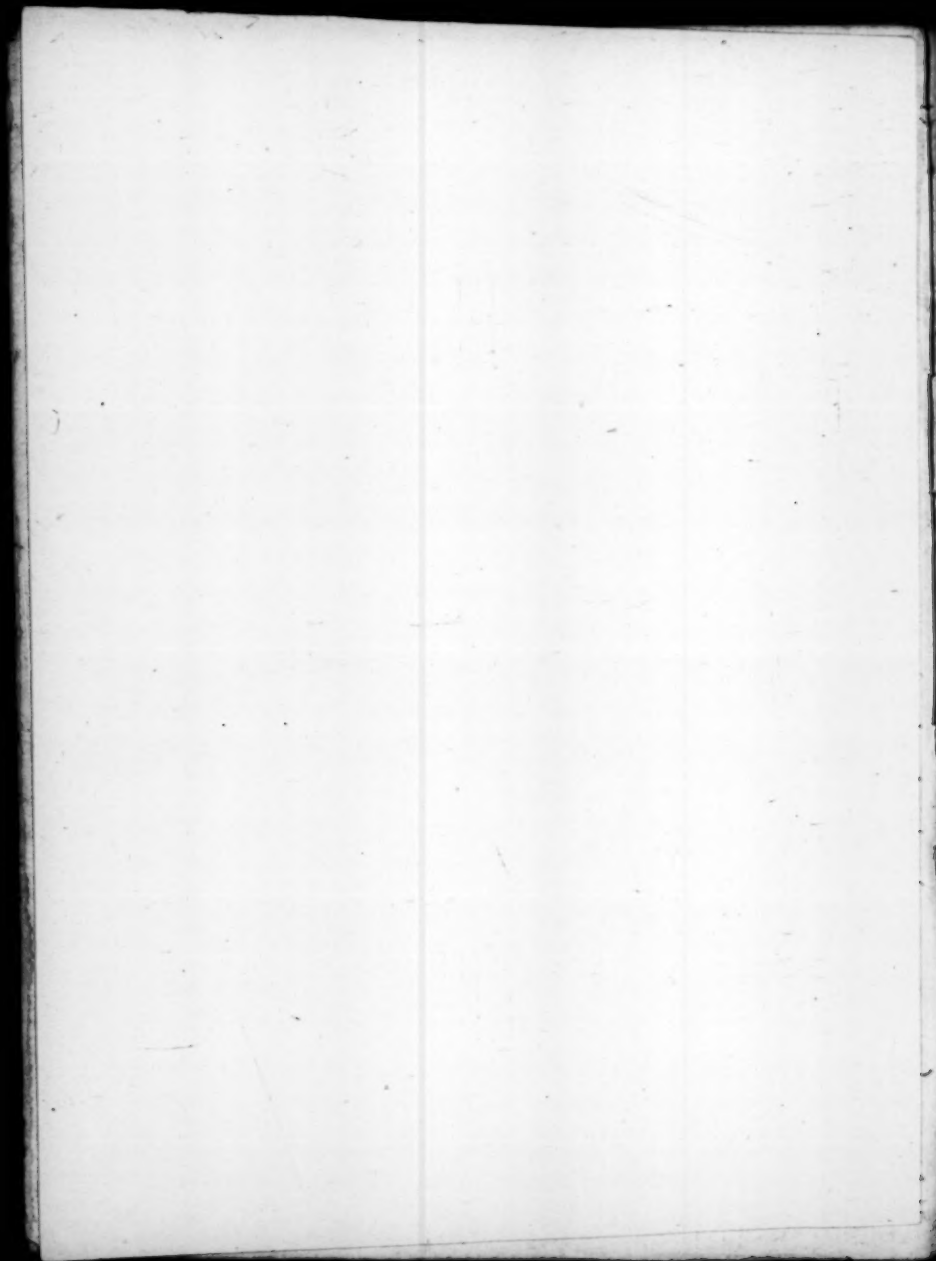
The actions then which Christ exerciseth solely and immediately over his Church, referre either to the beginning or end of his Kingly Office. To the beginning belongs his Legislative power, not only in the more plain promulgation of the Law, and the freeing of it from corrupt interpretations, but in the constitution of the Evangelicall Ministry and Sacraments, by the abolition of the Jewish rites. To the end relates that definitive Jurisdiction, whereby at the last day he shall condemne the wicked, and absolve the godly, and so deliver up the Kingdome to his Father. These Christ executeth only by himselfe. Those actions wherein he useth the Ministry of others, have relation (as I may so speak) either to the *outward, or the inward man*. To the inward man, when by the power of his Spirit accompanying his Word, hee illuminates the understanding, &c. Hence it is, because the work of Ministers and others herein, is subservient to the actions of God, who is the principall cause, or rather his work in and by them, the effect which belongs to the chiefe agent is sometimes applied to the instrument, and so they are said to save men, to remit sins, &c. The actions which relate to the outward man, consist in the defending and protecting of his Church

Church from Enemies and in the right ordering and ordaining of whatever may make for the better propagation and establishment hereof.

And here begins the Dispute concerning the Discipline Christ hath left for the government of his Church, and by whom it is to be administred. To omit the severall contests hereabouts, so full of passion and interest, that if Gods love to his Church had not been greater to preserve it, then the devills malice is, or can bee by these divisions to destroy it, it had been long since torne in pieces, which yet remains but in a shattered condition. It will not be impertinent I conceive, after all these stirs, calmly to inquire, Whether Christ hath left such a particular Discipline or form of Government, as his Church in all ages and places is to observe. I presume the rather to propose this, because the Scripture seems to speak hereof in generall terms only, as, Let all things be done decently and in order: and that we find some offices, as that of Widows in the Apostles times, which I know none that plead for now: and other customes, as saying *Amen* in Prayer with an audible voice: teaching or prophesying with the head uncovered, the contrary whereof is practised by the Ministers of the *French Churches*, with other things that might bee instanced in, which seem of Apostolical institution, and yet the practise thereof continued not long in the Church. Besides, the Reformed Churches differ herein much amongst themselves. Though the Church of *Geneva* holds, that Christ hath instituted four Orders for the government of his Church, Pastors, Doctors, Elders and Deacons, yet they seem as the *French Churches* to con-

found the office of Elder and Deacon, amongst whom, and the Churches of *Holland*, there is that difference in Discipline, that those *French Churches* that are there, have their Consistories and Synods apart. Whence we may inferre, there may be a unity in Doctrine, where there is not an uniformity in Disciplines: though the garment of Christ be without rent or seam, yet that of the Church may be of divers colours. And if wee should admit that Christ hath left a freedome and latitude to his Church herein, which we must doe, or condemne all the Churches of God that have been hitherto, since they have in all ages differed herein more or lesse. What needs all this adoe? Why doe not wee rather strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, then indeavour an impossible uniformity of what we can never reasonably expect. It will more concern us by a true faith to assure our selves that we are members of Christ, and consequently a part of the true Church, then to bee intangled any longer in these Questions, wherein though most make such peremptory divisions, according to the interest they have espoused, whoever seeks impartially to be resolved, will find little satisfaction, but possibly conclude, that as to the rites, and most things relating to the outward government of the Church, God hath prescribed no such certain constitution, as many pretend, but hath left them to be ordered according to the rules of Christian prudence and charity. And this appears to me most consonant both to truth and reason: for as when God made choise of the *Jews* for his peculiar Church, he particularly prescrib'd the rites and Government to be observed by them, fitted no doubt to the Genius and
nature





nature of that people, so now, that he hath diffused his Church over all nations, and that his worship, the shadows being took away, consists only in Spirit and truth, the prescribing of outward forms and discipline seems not so much to be the intent of the Gospel, as those that are most interessed therein, after they have made them matters only of their own cognizance, would put into our Creed. Sure I am, most Christian States have understood it so, as will appear if we look upon the Histories of the times past, or the constitutions of their government at present, who have ever looked upon the Church as contained in the State, and therefore have ordered all Ecclesiasticall persons and functions according to the Civill functions. Where-ever then wee find the Word of God faithfully preached, and the Sacraments duly administered, wee need not doubt but Christ hath his Church, though we may imagine many defects otherwise in point of Discipline, which, whilst wee amend whatever we know to be amisse in our selves, wee must leave to bee reformed by those who have the power committed to them, and who they are is the next Enquiry.

The thirst of Power and Government where it once takes is unquenchable, Ambition is a disease which is rather heightened then cured by Physick. What stronger preservative can bee prescribed against this poison, then the example of our Saviour in his life and doctrine? and yet what high towers of Pride hath bee than stiles himself his Vicar built upon this humble foundation? Let us then take heed, lest by pretending to advance the Scepter of Christ, we put a Reed into his hand, and by pleading

pleading for our own power ruine his. Since therefore the Church of God amongst us consists of Christian Magistrates, as well as Ministers and People, let us in the first place consider the Magistrates power and office; whose function, unlesse he fail of his duty, either as a Magistrate, or a Christian, must needs extend to the care and well ordering of all things whereby we may lead as well a godly as a peaceable life. By the law of nature we know the same man might bee, and often was both King and Priest, the office of Priesthood was still annexed to the Primogeniture in that most equal government of the Patriarchs over their families and descendents. And when by Gods positive law the Leviticall Priesthood was instituted, some reliques of the ancient custom still remained, the fathers of families were to slay the Paschall lamb, and any that was skilfull therein might circumcise; the gift of Prophecie, which might seem more peculiar to the Priesthood, was sometimes bestowed upon their Kings, and as often upon private persons as their Priests. And here it might be enquired, whether under the Gospel the office of Supream Magistracy, and a Pastorall charge might be performed by the same person: which though we should deny, would nothing prejudice our assertion, *Imperantis non est imperata facere, sed imperando jubere ut fiant.* Magistrates may well enough take care that Ministers perform their duty, and that all things relating to Religion be duly administered, without undertaking the particular functions themselves. Hence it is, that they are called, *Pastorum pastores, & custodes utriusque tabula.* Nor doth the lustre of Supream Authority ever appear more glorious then

then when it shines forth in the due care and ordering of religious matters, which either are or ought to be chiefly regarded. The *Roman* Emperours accounted the office of *Pontifex Maximus* too great to be imparted to others, and the best of Christian Princes have rather esteemed it their duty, then any intrusion, to take cognizance of things pertaining to Religion. If some have been more remisse therein then others, their neglect cannot prejudice the right of those that come after them. Those then are too uncivill with their Superiours, that whilst they make their own functions to passe for such solemn and sacred things, afford them only a Civill title. What, not their office too of divine institution? may not those that are nursing Fathers of the Church see that the children have bread? If the Bishop of *Rome* under pretence only of being Christs Vicar hath assumed so much power in the Church, may not they that are truly his Vice-regents, see that all things be administred according to his direction? And as their authority is divine because they are Magistrates, so we must allow their Acts to be something more then *Civil or profane* (as they are usually styled) if we have but so much charity as to take them for Christians. All Rivers lose their name when they come once to be emptied into the sea, and whoever gives up his name unto Christ, must be content only to bear his image and superscription, his whole man and all his actions are, or ought to be then truly Christian and holy. And as the Magistrate cannot say this or that hee may doe, as a Magistrate, but not as a Christian, since the tie of his Religion being the highest, swallows up all other relations, and gives the denomination to all his

actions, so ought not any ingenious man by such poore shifts and distinctions, for the compassing of I know not what pretended authority, either teach the Magistrate to neglect his duty, or others to contemn his power. But is not the Magistrate within the Church, and doth not the Pastors office extend to him, as well by the preaching of the Gospel, as by the exercise of the power of the Keyes? 'Tis true, he is, but we must not then make the Church such a thing, and afterwards give it that power as many doe, nor may the Pastors by the exercising of their Ministeriall function, thereby more pretend to advance their authority or office above his, then the Physician by curing him as well as others, or the Chirurgion, by lancing his wounds, or if need be, by cutting off some rotten member. Some object further, the inconveniences that would follow, if the Magistrates authority were thus far admitted, which yet by dividing the power, cannot but be far greater. And when all is said, the severall pretenders heretunto are Men, not Angels, from whom, as the Church may receive good, so it cannot be altogether secured from evill, because they are neither infallible in their judgments, nor unbyassed in their affections. Nor ought the fittest and ability which some pretend for the Ministers managing of Church affairs devest the Magistrate of his right: 'tis fit, and 'twas a good wish of him, *ut sapientes regnarent, aut regnantes saperent*, and yet wee must not expect, to have none States-men but Lawyers, or Kings but Philosophers only. Neither may the difficulty or abstrusnesse to judge of points in Religion (as some would make us beleieve) dethrone the Magistrate from his office, or deterre him from

from his duty. Every Christian is a competent Judge of these, and ought to passe sentence upon the profoundest Doctor, in trying his most subtil reasonings by the touch-stone of Gods Word, as far at least as concerns himself. If *Paul* when he was questioned concerning the Resurrection of the dead, appealed to *Cæsars* Tribunall, before whom (he saies) he ought to be judged, how can we be so dis-ingenuous, as to refuse that to the Christian Magistrate, which the Apostle gives to a Heathen Emperour? And certainly if Magistrates would but consider, that Religion is the power of their Power, and that which ought to governe their Government, they would with *David* make Gods law, their study, that they might thence learn to be wiser then their Teachers, and so avoid the imputation of incapacity or ignorance to perform that which ought to be their chief Art. And if conscience move them not hereunto (mee thinks) Policy should; if we were strangers to our own times, other ages would tell us how dangerous it is for the Supream Magistrates to suffer the great things of Religion to passe out of their hands. *Sacerdotum ea sunt ingenta, ut ni pareant, territent, & multitudo vana Religione capta melius vatibus quam ducibus pareat.* By this we may see, that the Magistrate is Gods Minister too for our good, as well in spirituall as temporall matters, and that as he ought to see all things duly observed and performed that God hath prescribed in his Word, so 'tis his right to determine and ordain whatever may make for the advancement of Religion in relation either to Offices or Persons, Civill or Sacred (as they are usually styled) in the administration of the whole policy or government

vernment of Christs visible Church, within the circuit of his jurisdiction. The Ordinances of the Church, of Geneva, where the ignorance of many in this point hath took sanctuary, will reach us thus much, for the Magistrates have stamp't their authority upon them in these words, *Nous Syndiques, petit, et grand Conseil de Geneve, &c. après avoir en de Pasteurs et Ministres de cette Eglise advis, conforme a la parole de Dieu, &c. avons ordonne et establi de suivre en nostre ville et territoire la Police Ecclesiastique qui s' ensuit.* The whole constitution of their policy was from the Magistrate, all the Ministers had to doe in it, was to give their advice only, so likewise if any difference arise among the Ministers in matters of doctrine, or that they be scandalous in their lives, the last Appeal is made to the Magistrate, who hath reserved to himself the finall judgment and determination thereof. Their neighbours the *Swissers* are something more strict in the managing of their authority, even to the imposing upon their Ministers that respect to their Magistracy, that they are not so much as to take notice in the pulpit of any failings in the execution thereof, without acquainting them therewith first in private, as understanding wel enough the strange effects that such discourses may produce, no lesse to the vilifying of the Magistracy, then the Ministry too at last. If the Magistrates power then bee of this extent, we that are Christians can do no lesse then pray, as the Heathens did for their Emperour, *ut Deus ipsi intelligentem divini humanique juris mentem det,* and that God would enable him with all graces fitting so great a function, whose performing of the great duty God hath laid upon him herein, will more truly advance, then

then lessen the Ministers office, which is next to be enquired into.

Hee that hath heaven for his throne, and the earth for his foot-stoole, is pleased to call the Church his House, where for the better ordering of all things, he hath placed some as Stewards and Overseers of the rest. Not to speak of those who were endowed with more extraordinary gifts for the performance of their spirituall functions, as the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, those we find frequently mentioned in Scripture, as the ordinary Dispensers of the mysteries of God, are sometimes called Bishops, sometimes Elders, Pastors, or Teachers, and these seem to import one and the same office or charge, otherwise I doe not rightly understand *St. Luke* in the 20 of the *Acts* 17. where *St. Paul* sends from *Miletus*, to call thither the Elders of the Church of *Ephesus*, whom in the 28 ver. hee charges to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy Ghost hath made them Bishops or Overseers: nor yet *St. Paul*, *Tit.* 1. 5. where hee speaks of leaving him in *Crete* to ordain Elders in every Church, and immediately infers, that a Bishop (the same that before hee had called an Elder) must be blamelesse, &c. the distinctions which were made in after times, and upon what grounds, are too large to bee mentioned here. In the Ministers charge we may consider,

1. The institution of the office it selfe, and this derives only from Christ, from whom they receive their commission.

2. The application of this office to a certain person, and this we usually call Ordination, which after due examination

mination both of life and doctrine, is wont to be performed with prayer and fasting by the Pastors themselves. 203. The designation or election of a person to a certain place; and this we find diversly managed in severall ages, according to the exigents of times & occasions, nor can there be any certain rule prescribed herein. Sometimes the Church it self claimed the right of electing their own Pastor, at other times the Pastors solely disposed of elections, and many times it so falls out, that to avoid popular confusion and faction, the Magistrate hath been constrained to assume this part only to himself, as it doth belong to him.

Lastly, to confirm the Minister in the exercise of his Pastorall cure, and to give all freedome and encouragement to the discharge thereof. Nor must that large commission which our Saviour hath given to the Dispensers of his Word and Sacraments, make them in the least manner to exceed their bounds. The Church cannot wel enjoy hers, unless *Cæsar* have his; all the power they can pretend to is for edification, not destruction, directive only and persuasive, no wayes coercive. If Christianity were to be enforced, what Armies would be sufficient to make the world beleeve in a crucified God, and a self-denying Religion? If this were not set upon mens minds by the power and demonstration of the Spirit, the demonstration of all other power would be to little effect. The power of the Keyes in binding and loosing so much insisted on, is no more then to declare, that heavens gates are open to the penitent, and shut to the obdurate, they cannot blesse those upon whom God will poure out his curses, nor curse those hee is pleased to blesse,

bleſſe, they are Embaſſadors only for Chriſt, and have
 nothing to deliver but what hee is pleaſed to command.
 Nor muſt Excommunication, and the delivering up of
 men unto Satan, which hath made ſuch a terrible noiſe
 of late, make us to apprehend, that Miniſters are armed
 with thunder and lightning, or that they can command
 fire from heaven to deſtroy all thoſe they take for *Sama-
 ritans*. We care not many times what we ſay or do when
 we are a little angry, and that our own intereſt is concern-
 ed, otherwiſe we ſhould not look upon delivering men up
 to Satan for ſo ordinary a buſineſſe as many would make
 it. That which the Apoſtle did in this caſe ſeems to have
 had ſomething of the miracle in it, and ſo is underſtood
 by moſt of the Ancients, and many learned Moderns
 too; and being ſo, ought neither to bee made a rule or
 example. As for Excommunication, by whom, and how
 it is to be managed, would require a larger Diſcourſe then
 this occaſion wil permit. That part of it which conſiſts
 in the debarring of men from the aſſembly of the Saints,
 & participation of the Ordinances, hath nothing of force
 or coercion in it, thoſe that wil may contemn it, 'tis only
 a puniſhment to them that apprehend it ſo, and deſire to
 be reconciled, the concomitants or conſequence there-
 of, as depriving men of their civill intereſt, or liberty up-
 on it, is meerly Politick. Nor is it conceived to hee of
 that neceſſity or uſe, but in ſome caſes it may and ought
 to be forbore. We may aſwell be too ſevere as too re-
 miſſe, and by pleading too much for the exactneſſe of
 diſcipline endanger the doctrine of the Church. If by our
 meekneſſe we cannot gain thoſe that are contrary minded,
 we ought with patience to endure them, & with ferven-

cy to pray for them, till it shall please God either to reform or remove them. Which we shal the more easily be perswaded to, if we consider that many are saints in Gods Kalendar, that are not so in ours, many fall into enormous sins, that are as angry with themselves for it, as we can be, & whose vertues, though we observe nothing but their imperfections, doe much preponderate their vices, and it may be our graces too. What though the tares grow in Christs field, and impure vessels be seen in his Temple, let us endeavour to make our selves as pure as silver refined, and to be as the wheat which hee will gather into his Garner. All things are pure to the pure, a pious conscience is not polluted by the impiety of others, nor are the holy mysteries defiled, because wicked men approach them with unwashten hands. Hee that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not mee. Thus wee see the Pastors office in all its parts is onely Ministeriall, it contains nothing of Magisteriall power or force, it governs only by serving, and commands by persvading. All the Jurisdiction it can claim is in the hearts and spirits of men, by that Word which is powerfull and mighty through God for the breaking down of the strong holds of sin only, and for the bringing into captivity every proud and rebellious thought. And whilst Ministers shall make it their only duty to divide the Word aright, without seeking to divide the power any longer with the Magistrate, the people wil more easily learn their duty and respect to both, and that threefold cord of mutuall love betwixt the Christian Magistrate, Minister and people will be better twisted and a due Harmony amongst all the parts and members both of Church and State sweetly preserved;

Which God Almighty grant!

ESSAY

ESSAY II.

SIR,

Since you are pleased to command my opinion concerning the lawfulness of entering into the present Engagement, and how far I have satisfied my self therein, I shall presume to impart to you my thoughts with all freedom. I must confesse I have endeavoured (as I doubt not you have done) the best I could to inform my self from what I could recover in print upon this subject, but what I have yet met with, seems to contain so much of prejudice and pre-engagement otherwise, that I am almost resolved to seek no further resolution thence, being loth in the least manner to subject my conscience to the passion or interest of others. And first I cannot but sadly reflect upon the condition of the times whereia we live, when the foundations are thus removed, who knows what he may righteously doe? But since God hath reserved us for these times, wee cannot do better then to inform our judgments, so as to prepare our minds to passe through them with the greatest content to our selves, and advantage to others that we can, and to take heed lest avoiding the plausible compliance of most in application to the present powers, let their commands be what they will, wee bee not too passionate on the other hand in forestalling our judgments from that impartiall deliberate debate we ought to make within our

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selves

selves in things of such consequence. We are not in the plate of God to dispose of the events of affairs, and since things are fallen out so contrary to our expectation, and possibly endeavours too, we ought to consider rather what may concern us in this present juncture of affairs, then what may seem to be required of us as to former relations, which possibly upon due examination may seem expired. At the beginning of our troubles we know what appeals were made by King and Parliament, both to God and the People, and the sword being laid hold on to decide the controversie, many good men were at a stand what to doe, who certainly if they had been left to themselves, being not convinced of the necessity the Parliament then had to defend themselves by force, would have desired (what many now doe) to have sate still, but the dispute grew so high, that all of considerable interests were involved with the one party or the other, and the principles of government being divided amongst themselves (for so they appeared to all, unlesse to such as would have, or endeavoured to make the Monarchy absolute) every man seemed let loose to follow that side which he conceived to be most just. And when it was expected (the Kings party having lost all their force, but little of their affections to maintain their cause) that an accomodation should be made with the King, we know what was first attempted against the Army; who whether they might think their service too great to be requited by the Parliament, I know not; sure I am, the Parliament then seemed more willing to be rid of their Benefactors, then to acknowledge the great benefit they had done them; and in a short time the jealousies grew
so.

so high, and the apprehensions of the Army so strong, that the end of their disbanding, was to bee the beginning of their ruine, and with them (as they imagined) if not of the greatest, yet of the best part of the Nation, and possibly of those too who were the forwardest to effect it, that they resolved to make use of that power God had put into their hands, and that the present necessity wherein they and their friends were involved, did call upon them to join themselves with those of the Parliament whom they accounted truest to their trust, though the major part opposed them, that they might thereby hinder the conjunction intended with the King, & consequently with his party, which was laid hold on by many, in hope thereby to make way for their own honour and preferment, and the ruin of the Army and their Abettors. This consideration seemed then so important, that to preserve the form and being of the Commonwealth, there was need of stronger physick then the usuall formalities observed in other cases would admit, and that if the Elements did change their place to avoid vacuity, which would cause a destruction in nature, they thought the Laws of civill affairs might admit of some dispensation; and though the attempting what they did, might seem to crosse some particular constitutions, yet 'twas hoped it would bee lookt upon by all indifferent wise men as corresponding to the generall and ultimate end of all formes and constitutions of Policy and government, the preservation of Justice, and good men that should be protected thereby. And looking upon the King as having forfeited all his interest by his carrying on the War to the utmost of his power, in his continued

application to those persons and counsells which have been so destructive to the Nation, and that he was so far from giving any satisfaction to God or them for those Rivers of blood which had overflowed the three Kingdomes, (which must either be put upon His, or the Parliaments account) that they could not perceive any reasonable security for the future, but that the restoring of him to his power, would be the reducing of the Nation to as former or worse miseries, they thought it just having him in their power to proceed against him as they did, and to exclude his posterity for that forfeiture he had made: And because neither they nor others could subsist, or hope to bee protected in their lives and properties, without the benefit of the Laws, and an established government submitted unto by all that hope for protection thereby, they declare for such a constitution as they conceive the times most capable of. I cannot but admire the providence of God in the whole progresse of our affairs, in crossing the designs and expectation of the most wise and Politick, and though we are told that miracles are ceased, yet sure he does wonders every day. No doubt but the courses that have been took to avoid ruin and destruction, seemed the only way to incur it to those that thought themselves the quickest sighted in State affairs both at home and abroad. The opposition was not small which was threatened here at home, but the difficulties that were to be encountered with in *Ireland*, and in all probability in *Scotland*, seemed insuperable, though other Nations would be perswaded to look on, which yet in reason could not be expected. And to speak truly, I should rather desire to spend my thoughts in
contem.

contemplation of those great changes God hath wrought amongst us, and in the acknowledgment of his great mercies that we are not consumed by them, then adventure to justify all that hath been done in order therunto, however, I am not so condemn all that I cannot justify, nor dare I presume to intrude upon the censure of those things that are above my sphere. If I had contributed my endeavours to this great change God hath wrought amongst us, I would produce my reasons for my acting therein, but seeing it hath been carryed on by others, notwithstanding all the opposition to the contrary hitherto, I had rather calmly debate with my self, how I might conscientiously enter into the Engagement, then by my own forwardnes give occasion to others to destroy me. Not to insist therefore upon that which some object, *viz.* former Oathes and Engagements, wherein they seem not so serious as they ought to be in such pretences, the interest of those they alledge them for, requiring more of the hand than tongue at this time, since their power and Kingdom is of this world, those that would be thought to be so much their servants, ought now, if ever, in all likelihood to fight for them, that which you seem most to desire is, that you might be forbore for being called upon to act with the present power (which you conceive the Engagement implies) though you seem to promise to act nothing against it. It were to bee wisht that all acts of policy were so tempered with piety, that they might command obedience from good men rather by their equity then penalty, and that the necessity of this change might appear so evident, and the equality and justice of the go-

vernment such, that there might bee no place left for gainfaying. But we seem to be faln so far into the dregs of vice, that we are not capable of the best constitution; we must not expect to be governed by angels in this world, though we were better men then we are. What if things be not so well as we could wish, wee cannot make them better by doing nothing, it may be they had been worse if most had had their desires. If the *prima mobilia* of government be so violently whirl'd about, the inferior orbs can have little rest. Nor can we expect, unlesse we prepare to live in some hermitage, but as we are sharers in the Publique interest lesse or more, so to act likewise some part therein. Those that are possesse of the power will tell us, that if we are not for them we are, or intend to be against them, and wee are able to tell our selves, that we cannot be Members of any civill association, but wee must needs acknowledge a head. If wee judg the power that is now claimed by those that are over us to be usurped and unjust, why doe not we endeavour to re-instate those we conceive to be the right owners? but if that be beyond our power, sure no one can judg himself obliged to an impossibility, nor can any one think those subjects distoyall, who having made all possible resistance, yeeld at last to the stronger. That power seems to be ceased, and consequently all Engagements to it, that hath no ability to protect those it claimes allegiance from, nor they any means left to defend it, they are the powers in being we are commanded to obey. Nor doe those that doe the most willingly comply with the present power alledge any thing more rationally for their engagement to it, then their protection by it. I have not
time

time strictly to examin what the more angry sort of men object against the matter of the Engagement, their chief strength seems to lie in this, that they suppose the acquisition thereof to be unjust, and consequently they that engage to it own that injustice, and are guilty of the wrongs thereby done to others. If that before hinted be not sufficient to answer this objection, let us consider, that upon this ground it will bee hard to submit to any power whatever, since seldome any enter into power but by the dispossessing of others, and the losers wil stil have some cause to complain. Besides, we are not competent Judges herein; nor are there any Courts erected to try such titles; if wee have a mind to dispute this, it must be rather with arms then arguments, wee can expect to receive no other answer to such objections, then to bee made sensible they doe not bear the sword in vain. 'Tis the exercise of the government, not the title of the Governors, that most concerns us that are Subjects, they are to answer this to a higher power, not to those that are below them. Briefly, though the Government bee not such as we could desire, or as we have promised to make it; yet since the Kingdoms of the earth are the Lords, and he giveth them to whom he pleaseth, and that our vows or Engagements cannot prescribe to the Almightyes providence, let us submit to his over-ruling hand; and unlesse wee desire to live alone in the world, or in continuall war, resolve that we must acknowledg some power, from which upon our alleagiance wee may expect protection, wherein the end and essence of all government seems to consist. I am afraid lest I have given you more trouble then satisfaction by this Discourse, which yet

yet I hope you will favourably interpret, the rather be-
 cause my particular obligations to you have put me upon
 this taske, and that my private condition hath hitherto
 suffered mee to remain more dis-ingaged then you can
 be, however I have endeavoured to inform my selfe the
 best I could, that I might either upon just grounds alto-
 gether decline the Engagement, or when I should be
 called upon, as freely take it, as I now subscribe my self

Durham. 5.

1649.

Your affectionate

ESSAY

ESSAY III.

SIR,

IF these times abounded as much in acts of piety, as they doe in discourse of Religion, if the Reformation which hath dwelt so long in mens mouths, had but sunk into their hearts, and appeared in their lives, we should then truly feel that happinesse, which wee have but for the most part all this while fancied, and quitting the cloud embrace that Goddesse, whose native beauty cannot but ravish, since so many have been enamour'd with her picture only. Holinesse is so attractive that her very Enemies desire to shrowd themselves under her wings, and to cövert the ulcers of their vicious lives with her garment. The Scribes & Pharisees loved to sit in *Moses* chair, and Machiavilians think they never put off their Politicks better then in Christs School; if they can but counterfeit *Jacobs* voice, they hope to passe well enough with *Esaus* hands. Hence it is that may have made Religion a temporall interest only, and under the specious title of godlinesse drive on those wicked designs which might make a modest heathen to blush, giving us in stead of the real demonstrations of true piety, outward formes only, or else a company of packt words and canting language, more becoming a charm then true devotion. That wee may not therefore either deceive our selves or others, or think we come to a fourth parts in this world

as Mountebanks upon a stage, where the most mimick hablers passe for the most sufficient men: we must know that Religion is not a common place of terms and notions, it dwells not in the clouds of airy fancy, and sublime speculations. If it swim only in the head, without taking root in the heart, it may send forth leaves, but it bears no fruit, or if any, like those apples which were fair to look upon, but being toucht, fell to powder. The life of holinesse is most conspicuous in the holinesse of mens lives. No sooner does Gods Spirit move upon our souls, but we bring forth abundantly all good works. The least sparkle of divine light that kindles in our minds, burnes as well as shines; if it doe not warm our affections as well as enlighten our notions, we may justly suspect it is some *ignis fatuus*, no ray that is darted from the *Sun of righteousness*, or the *Father of lights*. An irreligious holinesse will profit us nothing, they are really wicked that are but vertuous in words and shew only. It will not therefore be impertinent briefly to consider the influence that Religion ought to have upon all our actions, and how we may rather live, then talk devoutly.

Religion then, if it bee true, as it beleeveth all that God reveals, so it obeys in all that he commands [his commandements are exceeding broad, and we shall not bee ashamed, when we have respect unto them all]. There is a concatenation of vertues and graces as well in Divinity as Morality, hee that pretends but to some few of them has none at all. The two Tables make but one law, and though they be first and second in regard of the object of which they treat, the worship of God, and love of our Neighbour, yet they ought to be one and the same in

our

our observation. Nor must we think that this Law published on Mount *Sinai* is any other then the Law of Nature, which the Scripture calls the Law written in our hearts; and which every one might read, were not the characters so defac'd by sin and corruption. This, as it is most agreeable to right reason, so we find lively impressions thereof in many actions of the Heathens, which, because they seemed to fail, either in the principle which set them a work, or in the end which they aimed at, some passe over only with the title of *splendida peccata*, but how rightly, I intend not here to examine. Sure I am, this is the divine unalterable law which Christ came to fulfil, & which by the finger of his Spirit he writes afresh in the hearts of all those that belong to him. The Gospel it self is nothing but this law illustrated, and this law nothing else but the Gospel obscured. The Religion of the *Jews* was the same with that of *Adam, Noah*, & the other Patriarchs, and ours with both, the difference only this, that we enjoy a cleerer light of that day which *Abraham* rejoiced so much to see, the various rites and ceremonies with the different manner of Gods manifestation of himself to us and them, though it may seem to argue a difference of Religion to those, whose Religion is nothing but fashion and ceremony, or a form of words, it cannot to any, who shall consider that Christ was the lamb slain from the beginning of the world, (by faith in whom they are saved as well as we) and that the same law was a rule to all, and must be unto the end of the world. And this as it is sometimes called the Law of Nature, so more usually with us the Morall Law, because it is the rule of our actions and manners, and that part thereof which

D 2 *teacheth*

teacheth us the duties we owe each to other, goes mostly under the name of *universal justice*, a vertue so comprehensive, that it includes all the rest, so diffusive, that it extends to all the actions that concern either our selves or others. And though many self-seekers please themselves only with the name of godly, as if it were a silly and dangerous thing to be just withall; yet we shal find at last, if justice be wanting, our fained godlinesse will stand us in little stead, though it may gain us applause with men, it will but adde to our further condemnation with God. The greatest Saints have been mostly by themselves, and too often by others accounted the greatest sinners. Since those that are wicked are loth to give to good men the title of godly, they must be careful how they attribute it too much to themselves, lest they bee conceived to have something of the Pharisee. Humility is the truest character of a Christian, it contends not about words, nor is ambitious of great names. Though it bee all one to be just as holy, yet we find the Just man more often mentioned in scripture then the godly, to shew us that 'tis but a vain pretence to be pious unto God, unlesse wee bee just unto all. And since Justice is that vertue, whereby wee render unto every one what belongs to him, let us consider all the relations wee have, whether private or publick, all the duties we owe to our Superiours, Equals or Inferiours. And if wee acquit our selves herein as good and just men, wee shall thereby more truly advance the work of Reformation, and adde a greater lustre to Religion, then by all the devices that either ignorant, or Politick hypocriticall men have invented hitherto, which that wee may all performe is, and ever shall be the earnest prayer of

ESSAY IV.

SIR,

MAny sad complaints there are abroad in the world of the diseases both of our Church and State, and though both have lain a long time almost bed-rid, yet it hath been their fate hitherto to meet oftner with Empericks then Physitians, with such who understand better to gain advantage by their distempers, then honour by a seasonable and skilfull cure. This seems to invite every one to contribute as well the best of their thoughts as prayers to find out some means (if possible) for a recovery; and though our disease bee like a Hectique fever (easie at first to be cured, though hard to be found out, but afterwards more easily discerned, then remedyed) yet sure there is a balsame for every wound, which though we cannot alwaies be so happy as to recover, we must endeavour at least to attain, unlesse we have a mind to perish as well by our own folly as weaknesse. To omit the severall oppressions in civill and sacred things, which seem to have occasioned our troubles at first, together with the causelesse complaint of the present burdens, which no one can rationally expect to bee removed, till our own distempers, and the implacable Enemies of this State both at home and abroad bee better quieted, there is nothing at present which seems more worthy of the serious consideration of all that are truly pious and discrete,

discreet, then to find out some effectuall means how to unite the severall factions in matter of Religion at home, and then how to secure our Religion from those that would destroy it from abroad.

Every natural body desires as much its unity as entity. Shee was the true Mother of the Child that would not have it divided. We depart as much in effect from Christ and his doctrine, as we separate each from other. Those Members that have not a communion amongst themselves, have no union at all with the head. Since therefore all division in matters of Religion is very irreligious, it will concern us, as much as our souls are worth, which we may as well lose for want of charity as faith, to endeavour the making up of these breaches, which might possibly be effected, if setting aside matters of lesse moment and circumstance, we would intend those things that are really fundamentall, and essentially required of every Christian, which as they are few, so are they cleer and obvious to all that desire to know the truth. Those things which are necessary to eternall life as well as our temporall livelyhood, are neer at hand, if wee delight only in curiosities they will cost us deere. I was well said of one, that he *liked the world as God made it, but not as men have made it*: If wee behold Religion in that native simplicity and beauty wherewith God hath attired her, we cannot but fall in love with her, but if wee look upon the dresse which the passions and interests of men have put upon her, all her comeliness is gone, we shal then have much adoe to know her face through the painting, and be forced to acknowledge her self to be the least part of that which she seems to be. How many doe still take
the

the glittering shewes of humane inventions for true piety, and cry up the *Idea's* of their own brain for patterns in the Mount. And it were well if they might passe for such with themselves only, and that they would not be angry with others, who have not so easy a faith, as to take all for Gospel that they fancy. It hath been a great policy in the Church of *Rome*, first to invent what might make for their temporall interest, and afterwards to set their Doctors a work how to make it a part of their Creed: it were well if we had kept a great distance from *Rome* in this, as we pretend to do in other things, and that we had not endeavoured more to serve our selves then God in many late undertakings for Reformation. We pray daily that Gods kingdom may come, but in stead of that dominion and Empire he ought to exercise in our hearts and lives, we erect other thrones, and endeavour to make his scepter rather externally politick, then inwardly powerfull. If we would then have Christ to reign, and the government to be rightly settled on his shoulder, let us at last ingenuously confesse what we cannot conscientiously conceal, That the Kingdom of God is only righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; it consists in the inward man of the heart, in the subduing of our corruptions, and the conforming of our lives to that humility and self-deniall that shines in the life and doctrine of our Saviour. The externall rites and discipline so much insisted upon, are rather the garments then either body or soul (any essentiall part) of Religion, which upon diligent enquiry we shall find in all ages to be shaped according to the infancy and growth of severall Churches, and still conforming less or more to the civill constituti-

ons. And this being once acknowledged, as it needs must
 bee by all, who love the truth in sincerity, and that have
 not pawn'd their wits and conscience to maintain some
 by-interest, what hinders but that this envious wall of
 Partition being broken down, all that take Christ for
 their head, may unite together as members of the same
 body, and pursue the unity of the Spirit in the bond of
 peace? Let the *Machiavilians* of this world study how
 to divide and reign, Christians ought to practise how
 they may unite and obey, the discipline of mutuall love
 will more advance their cause, then all the love they have
 hitherto shewed for Discipline. And this being once
 concluded, the next taske will be calmly to debate and
 agree amongst our selves what the fundamentals of Reli-
 gion are, which might be broght sure into a narrow com-
 passe, and so cleerly exprest that all might understand
 them. *Certa semper sunt in paucis, & quicquid ad sala-
 tem Christianorum necessarium est, quicquid nos meliores
 beatioresque facit, in aperto ponitur.* And these being as-
 sented unto, Why should we too curiously search after
 those things which we may more safely bee ignorant of?
 Why should wee bee angry with all those, who though
 they agree with us in the principles, differ sometimes in
 the conclusions and superstructures? All have not the
 same means or measure of understanding. Some mens
 errors accompanied with meeknesse of Spirit, deserve a
 better censure then the truth which others utter in proud
 and contemptuous language. At least let us avoid all
 names of faction, especially that odious name of Here-
 tick, which seems to declare an open war to those wee
 fixe that brand upon, and alarums all their force to re-
 tort

tort that dart upon the face of those that first cast it.
~~This pursuing the truth in love, and with meekness~~
 convince the gainayers, then by all the anathema's and
 fulminations that are usually darts out upon them; and
 if we cannot be so happy as hereby to convince the Pa-
 pists, and other declared enemies of our Church and
 State, we shall at least by this our union prevent their de-
 strines, and obtain that peace which we have so long ex-
 pected, and is most earnestly desired by

SIX

THE

of which it is too true (I think) that the
 now the weight of the former (though under
 sometimes but many times in a world manner) might
 justly cause us to apprehend, that the dress of that cup
 of vengeance which hath already been poured out upon
 us, and is now being poured out upon us, is not
 empty, there is now reason to apprehend more danger
 than that of a single drop, and that of which yet reigns a
 by part of the public good, and think they never pro-
 fessing themselves Christians, and yet they are empty
 of all charity to others, and think they never appear
 God bless them, and they have been in the
 great distress, and they are like him that is weak and
 that is weak and that is weak, and they are weak in the
 and would not think it their duty to be weak, and
 which is upon the Terrors. We are no less than
 cast

ESSAY

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ESSAY V.

IT is no unusuall thing for those to complain of the times, of whom the times have most just occasion to complain. We cry out against those distempers which wee our selves have caus'd, and doe much wonder that the times are so bad, when we see men daily grow worse. If this present age had brought forth no new monsters of iniquity (of which it is too frutfull) the acting over a new the transgressions of the former (though under better names but many times in a worse manner) might justly cause us to apprehend, that the dregs of that cup of vengeance, which hath already been poured out upon us, are yet behind. Amongst other symptoms of future calamity, there is none seems to pretend more disaster, then that emulation and hatred which yet reigns amongst all parties, whilst many account their private envy part of the publick good, and think they never persecute Gods cause better, then when they persecute each other. So full are most of themselves, that they are empty of all charity to others, and think they never approach God neerer, then when they keep their Brethren at the greatest distance. Many are like him that would measure all his guests by himself, and if they exceeded in stature, would cut them shorter, if they were lesse, would stretch them upon the Tenters. We are no lesse tyrannical

call to mens opinions then he was to their persons, wee arraign them all at the bar of our own judgments, and passe a finall condemnation upon them, according to the bare verdict of our own fancies. Al is *terra incognita* that lies beyond the line of our discovery, and whoever lives not in all points as we doe, must bee accounted no lesse then a *Barbarian*. If others vertues seem to outshine ours, we endeavour by all means to obscure them, and if their candle burns dimmer, wee are not content till wee have quite put out their light. What the Heathens were wont to say heretofore of the Christians, *See how they love each other*! most that passe for Christians may now more truly say of many of the Heathens in comparison of themselves, How sweet is revenge to some mens taste! how ingenuously wicked are they! appearing then *well-affected*, even when they are most malicious, and thinking their particular condition too mean to repay their private grudges, adventure to put them upon the publike score. The diseases of this kind that reign among us, wee may rather suspect to have been caused, then ever hope to be cured by the receipts of *Machiavel*, his *Divide & impera* (as if the Kingdoms of this world were to be maintained as the Devill doth his, by strife and division) seems to weigh more in our practise, then that (of our Lord and Master (which he makes the badge of his Disciples) to *love one another*. If we desire then truly to approve our selves to be Christians (and we should be very angry at any that would censure us for other) let us deuest our selves of malice and detraction, and put on the garment of charity, which will cover the nakednesse of our former actions, and make us comely in the eys of God and man.

What can we see in our selves, that we should so much admire; or in others, that we should so much blame? the best of men, if we look upon the worst of their actions, will appear something monstrous, and the worst of men for ought we know are not so bad, but they are still capable of Gods grace, and may be better by our loving assistance. Where the Spirit of God reigns, there is love and peace, he descends in the shape of the Dove, not of the Vulture, and where his grace dwells, it is most diffusive; if it be not like that stone which converts all to gold, we may be assured nothing shall bee defiled by its touch. True Religion makes men more charitable, not more censorious, it confines not the free grace of God to any particular persons or factions, nor endeavours to impale that Spirit in any one orb or circuit, that blowes where it listeth. If we are commanded to love our enemies, I know not any that we are permitted to hate. And certainly love is the most noble revenge we can take even of our enemies. By retaliation of wrongs we can but be their equals, in this we are still their superiours, and may hope not only to conquer, but to indear them to us at last. Nor is there any way so safe as this, we have the security of heaven engaged for our protection; and if we can but bring our spirits to this temper, may bee assured that Gods angels wil pitch their tents about us. And thus passing an Act of oblivion in our own breasts for all the injuries we have received from others, and overcoming of evil with good, we shall make both our selves and others much better, and with our own peace procure (at least as much as in us lies) the generall peace of the nation, the establishment whereof he most zealously affects, that is

Sir,

Your —

ESSAY

ESSAY VI.

IF custome did not pass for a law, the lawes against many abused customes would more easily passe. Those errors which can plead prescription are hardly reformed, nor must we think a short time sufficient to remove the vices which have continued for many ages. I doe not so much wonder at those who contend for the observation of *Christmasse* (as we commonly call it) and other usuall Festivals) as at their quicknesse that would blow them away with one breath. Nature never introduceth the form, but shee first prepares the matter. If the minds of men were sufficiently molded for better impressions, it would bee more easy to take away the old leaven, but wee must expect to have that done by degrees, when it shall please God by the gentle breathings of his Spirit to blow away that animosity and bitterness which yet reigns in mens minds. When the *Athenian* Law-giver was asked whether hee had given them the best laws, hee answered, the best of those they were capable of. And it was objected to *Cato* himself, that he did many times more hurt then good by speaking in the Senate, as if he had been rather in an imaginary *Platonick* common-wealth, then such a corrupt vicious one, as theirs then was. Hee is the best Artist that applies his work to the matter, not hee that pretends to make the most curious statues of the crookedest timber. The

crookednesse of mens minds in this age is such, that hee must bee a God that would bring in an universall Reformation all at once. It will be then requisite to consider the temper of the people, and what they are susceptible of, as well as the nature of that we desire to introduce or take away. There hath been enough (if not too much) already hinted concerning the former: as to the latter, wee shall find the civil as well as the religious part (if I may so speak) of these Festivalls much insisted on. The first is a strong advocate for the second, the entertainments and recreations wherewith they are usually accompanied, have made them more gracious; and wee need not wonder since so many make their gain to bee godlinesse, if some would have their pleasure also to pass for such. The best way to convince those of the errors of their judgment, that plead so strictly for the observation of these Holy times (as they are pleased to call them) were to find out some means how to reform the errors of their lives, but that being so difficult, where men generally are fallen into the dregs of vice, let us briefly consider what is commonly said for the religious part of them. And here the long continuance of some of them at least, amongst Christians of all ages, is much pleaded for, and the famous contests about their punctuall observation (especially that of *Easter*, between the *Eastern* and *Western* Churches) not a little insisted on. What was judged lawfull for the Christians of those times, they conceive ought not to bee condemned as superstitious now; and the many abuses that later times have brought upon them, which were not of the originall institution, might (as they suppose) more easily be removed, then the

the thing it self utterly, and at once abolished. There was the Freewill offering, as well as the Daily sacrifice in the Temple, and they presume there may bee a liberty for Christians, to set apart some dayes for a more particular memoriall of Christs Incarnation, &c. though there bee no exprels command for it in scripture, if there bee none against it. They instance further, that they are so farre from attributing any sanctity to these times as such, that they think no day amongst Christians ought to bee accounted holy of it self, otherwise then in relation to those exercises of piety that are performed therein. And they much wonder (which is not sleightly to be past over) that all observation of these times is strictly forbidden as superstitious, when a kind of Judaicall observation of the Sabbath seems to be enjoined as sanctimonious. It would be tedious to repeat what may be said in these contests, if we desire our own or others satisfaction herein, let us be carefull how we impose a necessity, where God hath left us in an indifferency. The Apostle tells us, *That he that regards a day, regards it unto the Lord, and hee that regards not a day unto the Lord he doth not regard it*, and why we should be more severe then he, I know not. If we look upon the observation of dayes as part of the Ceremoniall law, which is now abolished, why doe we attribute a sanctity to the Lords day more then to any other, further then as it is designed for our meeting together to hear Gods Word, and perform other acts of devotion? If we understood rightly the body and substance of our Religion, which is Christ, wee should not dwell any longer in these shadows, nor would wee neglect the greater things of the law, which are Justice and
Judge-

Judgement, whilst we spend so much time about ry-
thing of Mine and Cummin, in pursuance of small mat-
ters, which would follow of themselves, if we could not
be so happy as rightly to establish things of moment. I
shall trouble you no further at present, but only to crave
pardon for intrenching too much on your time, in pre-
sented you with this sleight Discourse of the times, ever
remaining

SIR, nothing more to be said on this subject, but only to say that I am
your humble servant

Your humble servant
much wonder (which is not likely to be past over) that
all observation of this time is so little observed as it
is, and that a kind of indifference is shown to it.

It seems to me that the reason of this is, that we
be so much taken up with the concerns of this world,
we desire our own or others satisfaction herein, let us be
careful how we improve it, where God has placed
us in an indifferency. I am, *FRYER.*

And I am, *FRYER.*
why we should be more concerned in it, than we are.

we look upon the observation of times as part of the
Commonwealth, which is now dissolved, why does we
attribute authority to the Lord, when we have no
other, than that it is so, and for our meeting
gather to hear Gods Word, and so, and other acts of
devotion, if we understand rightly the body and the
spirit of our Religion, which is Christ, we should not
allow any longer in these things, nor would we reg-
ard the greater things of the Law, which are Justice and
Judice.

